



Latvian Identity

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Introduction

Humans as social beings are not limited to introspection and self-observation. Human beings observe others, compare and come to conclusions about themselves, their nearest group and country. The self, the identity are reference points in self-comprehension. The scientifically sociologic tradition of identity theory has developed in relation to the symbolic interactionism trend. This trend in its turn roots in the pragmatic theory of self by William James (1842-1910) and George Mead (1863-1931). This theory defines the self as a uniquely human ability to reflect about his own nature and social world with the help of communication and language.

Within the framework of this research the author is analysing the Latvian world outlook and the search for national identity. Ethical and epistemological problems are analysed in a greater detail. The methods used in the research are scientific analysis of literature, philosophical reflections, and observations. Identity is the research object of different scientific fields. Until now there has been no unified explanation and classification of identity. From the sociological point of view, the most significant statements can be found in the works of Jonathan A. Smith (1945-), Zygmunt Bauman (1925-), Richard Jenkins (1952-), Charles Cooley (1864-1929), George Mead (1863-1931), and Georg Simmel (1858-1918). Two comparison criteria are used for the comprehension of identity concept: similarity and difference as dynamic principles of identification. As a result one can speak of personal, social and collective identity.

When dealing with national identity, we have to clarify the most frequently used terms.

Ethnos is a biologically social group of people that has developed through lasting historical development in a particular natural environment and that is united by common culture, traditions, language, mentality, and uniform anthropological features.

Ethnic identity is one form of collective identity. Ethnic identity is related to belonging to a certain ethnic group or nationality which is a community of people sharing the same origins, historical memory, common cultural elements, attachment to a particular territory and common cognition. The history of an ethnos consists not only of traditional culture, language, events, and environment, but also of everything new that the ethnos comes into contact with under the circumstances of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

People – an ethnos-based and historically developed totality of a country's population with a name and self-awareness. **Nation** – a human community based on one or several populations of people that are related to each other with historical development, language, culture, and collective economics and politics.

National identity is related to the concept of 'others'. It is a sense of borders that unites individuals and separates categories 'we' and 'them'. The sense of national identity gives the individual a chance to notice and become aware of the personal self and own position in the world through the prism of specific national culture and collective individuality. Identity is the notion of characteristics and uniqueness. It is a human sense of belonging related mainly to culture or origin. One could say that it is a deep inner need, a universal, objective necessity of a personality to be someone, to be aware of oneself among equals. Even disregarding the genes and not listening to the call of blood, a human realizes his belonging to a certain ethnos and this feeling brings sense of security. All social interactions and interrelations take place in time and space.

Contemporary discussions on nation emphasize two features: 1) place of residence, statehood as a political category or 2) ethnicity. Land and belonging to an ethnic community are significant factors but nation as first mental culture and community of a type of culture that is being held together by myths of its origin, historical memories and values.

Globalization and ethnos

Under the circumstances of globalization, open borders and transparent information, the question about relationship between individual ethnic belonging and general human existence becomes topical. On one hand, the interest in ethnic identity and maintaining it grows bigger. On the other hand, a multi-ethnic, multicultural and cosmopolitically oriented existence is being advocated. Societies as social structures are formed by intersection of several social structures. The majority of particular community members usually have some kind of common identity feeling. This feeling can become apparent both in practical actions and discursive cognition. It is not always an intentional and common comprehension of values. Individuals can feel belonging to a certain community, ethnos, but in the meantime they might not reflect about it and not regard it as good, right or even bad. Current society brings forward different priorities and values. Characteristics of nowadays – spacetime convergence, "triumphal procession" electronic means of communication – create a comprehensive feeling of presence and information

availability. As a result economic, political and cultural processes intensify, creating a unified global structure. Globalization is a phenomenon that changes worldview, its spatial horizons. Conceptions and opinions on globalization, especially on the global culture as a new, hybridized cultural identity, are very different, sometimes even contradictory. One can speak of hyperglobalists who think that one, Americanized global culture is not only possible, but even preferable. Sceptics, in their turn, regard culture as a field of growing conflicts, thus proving that the view of a unified, global culture is not worth it under the circumstances of growing ethnic conflicts, economical problems and cultural nationalism.

Traditions of transformism (B a u m a n 2002) describe positive and negative features of globalization and build scenarios on improving the globalization processes.

The key argument of opponents of a global culture is the idea that global culture turns against traditional lifestyles and exterminates historically evolved elements of cultural identities.

The topicality of this problem is being highlighted by the mere existence of extremely antagonistic opinions – one speaks of globalization being a reason for renaissance and development of local cultural identities. In this context the term ‘glocalization’ is sometimes being used in order to describe the interaction between local and global cultures.

Culture and ethnos

Culture is undeniably under the command of history and time. Some cultural forms, if properly cultivated and acknowledged, can exist several thousands of years; others leave together with the century, giving place to new, contemporary forms.

Culture can be interpreted as a way of existence, a technology which fulfils in certain existential archetypes, mentality, common mythological motives, and concept systems. It is a firm system, certain body of world acquisition and interpretation means, universal entirety, unit of meaning that conveys the uniqueness of every region, historical age, and ethnos. Culture is the way humans express their nature through things and occurrences, thus assigning them a human nature. Therefore culture is always related to a particular individual, social group, people, and nation.

Culture develops only in a society, but it is also relatively self-dependent. It consists of codes for actions, acts and behaviour that are embedded in conceptions, symbols of art and religion, cultural monuments. Cultures of different people differ because of the different lifestyles, traditions and habits. National culture is based on mentality of people, their system of values. National history and experiences stores language, folklore, religion, art, moral traditions. Therefore it would be possible to assume that a culture can be national only and that there is no ground for the liberal myth of a common human culture. However, one cannot eliminate the possibility that every culture contains common human elements.

The “bearer” of national culture and identity is the memory of a nation. Therefore a global culture (if existent) would be an artificial construction without a memory.

The most characteristic form of mental culture is, first of all, the combination of knowledge and values created by mental actions of humans. There are achievements in science, art and literature and they influence ideas about the beautiful, the meaning of life, value orientation, restrictions and regulations of behavioural norms. There are several basic elements of mental culture:

1) Symbols as means of organization of human experience expressed with the help of signs;

2) Conceptions about aspects of experience about the mutual interaction between material and spiritual world and their organization;

3) Values as objectives;

4) Norms as a means of behavioural regulation.

Culture is an expression of identity. In the scientific discourse one can still discuss on how to define identity but there is no doubt that the language and folklore are real results of identity in action. The tradition of culture is not a static concept of identity – it is simultaneously formation and elucidation of culture and cognition. Ideas that have ruled a particular period of time are historical facts – not only the facts itself are important but also the way they are understood.

Latvian identity, character, language

Nationalism as a problem appears late in Europe and as a political phenomenon it arises only in the 18th century. The century of Enlightenment was also called the century of Philosophy. During this period in Latvia philosophical awareness of folklore begins as the result of understanding that ‘dainas’ store wisdom, values, ideals, goals, ways and style of life of the people. (In the Folklore section of Latvian Academy of Sciences there are approx. three millions of folklore units.) Not in vain were the German pastors, whose main concern was to turn Latvians towards the German way of life and morals, suspicious and ill-disposed against Latvian ‘dainas’. The most renowned promoter of Enlightenment Gotthard F. Stender (1714-1796) attempted to replace what he called ‘nonsense songs’ with his own compositions. The spiritual self-confidence of Latvian people begins in folklore which contains archetypical elements of world structure comprehension. For a certain period of time the folklore was the main means expression of people’s world view. It gives evidence about how significant answers were sought and found – to questions about humans and the existence of society: what is the world, what is the position and objectives of humans therein? The world view in folklore is being conveyed from generation to generation through experience. In Latvian ‘dainas’ and mythology one can observe a very strong symbolic reality which has possibly served as a survival guarantee for people, for there is more light and order in the symbolic reality. These wisdoms have helped the people to survive and to preserve and improve their language and culture. When interpreting the

folklore material philosophically, there are several problem fields to notice: value system, ethic and aesthetic conceptions, human self-communion and introspection, soul problem. In the centre of folklore compositions there has always been the human being and existential questions. The principle of arranging “Latvju Dainas” (*Latvian folk songs*) by the “father of dainas” Krišjānis Barons (1845-1923) is also anthropological, based on the human cycle of life. Yet the human life cycle is inseparably connected to belonging to a particular nation and this means common origins, language, territory and traditions. “The body of the nation is the people, belonging to the nation <...>. Further the belongings of the nation is the land with all its riches; its nerves are the language, its brain – national wisdom, its beauty – artworks, organic processes – customs, and the muscle contractions – economic or technical activities. Thus every nation shows following organic components: common consciousness, blood, land, language, wisdom, beauty, customs and techniques” (Reiznieks 1936, 54).

A number of national identity researchers have noted that Latvian character has been shaped by the nature of Latvia and geographical position. There are no high hills, rapid rivers or radical climate changes in Latvia and therefore Latvian character is also “moderate” and “down-to-earth”. Garlieb Merkel (1769-1850) and Pēteris Birkerts (1881-1956) claim the geographical position to be responsible for Latvian enviousness – a feature regarded by many to be a significant feature of Latvians, especially nowadays. Small country, small people, insignificant natural resources – as a result the Latvian holds to his “own nook”, his own little space, and is a stingy, jealous and grudging person. One can say that Latvian living is slow and steady, not open to outer world.

Every nation possesses features that distinguish it from other people. However, it is complicated to give characteristics of a nation, because it is not possible to find a precise pattern and a credible methodology that could comprise all features of particular people. Therefore the concepts of “nation soul” and “nation character” are more figurative and descriptive rather than analytical and logically reasonable.

When thinking about the common consciousness of a nation, one has to take into account not only the totality of people living now in particular territory. A nation consists also of already gone and maybe yet to come generations.

The nation as it is now is being shaped by the history. Only relating to the history it is possible to understand the essence, the soul of the people. Though the nation consists of separate and different individuals, they have similar emotions, ideas, tendencies, ideals, attitude towards other people and nature. Therefore every nation has different working approaches, they sing, dance and pray differently, disregarding the fact that their religion, work principles and poetic rhythms might be the same as for other people.

The most striking and complete expression of the soul of a nation is language that stores and displays the spiritual inheritance of the people.

¹ Free translation by the author of the article.

The development of written language in Latvia starts comparatively late. The promoters of Enlightenment Stender, Mathias Stobbe, Gustav Manteuffel (1832-1916) start to create the first magazine in Latvian “Latvian Annual” and Manteuffel publishes the “Inflanty Timebook” or calendar.

The historical self-confidence of a nation begins with the continuity of spirit, consciousness of succession, as well as with the gathering and summarizing of spiritual heritage. The development of the language boosted the development of national consciousness and Latvians started to recognize themselves as a community with original history and culture. Only starting from the 19th century, from the period of national awakening Latvians get active and switches from being a historical object to a historical subject. New values become important – honour, respect, conscience, love of the fatherland, and they way these values develop and display within the Latvian identity. The interest towards the Latvian identity can be seen in such historical researches as “The Latvians, Especially in Livonia, at the End of the Philosophical Century” (1953) by Merkel, reflections “Latvians” (1910) by Rainis, the double-volume research “Latvians” (1930) by Pēteris Šmits, Ludvigs Adamovičs, Arveds Švābe, Arnolds Spekke, “Problems of National Live” (1936) by Pauls Jurevičs, “Life Wisdoms of Latvian People” (1937) by Birkerts, “The White Gown: Variations on Latvian Themes” (1947) by Zenta Mauriņa, and “The World Outlook of the Ancient Balts” (1983) by Norbertas Vēlius.

The history displayed also in the above mentioned researches gives evidence that Latvian identity is shaped by at least two trends – Latvian traditions and presence of foreigners, non-Latvians. Practically there has been no period of time when Latvia would have been genuinely free. Therefore Latvians had to put great effort in maintaining themselves in relationship towards neighbouring ethnic groups, conquerors or simply crowds of passers-by. The role of this aspect in the comprehension of identity of Latvian people has been much discussed and interpreted. Poetess Māra Zālīte claims that “we have a mental illness called tottering identity. We cannot define our own identity. And I doubt if we really want to define it... We cannot really understand who we want to be” (Zālīte 2011, 32). However, the collective memory maintains the myth that in general Latvians are nice people with lots of good features, but the historical conditions have spoiled them. Therefore Latvians lack healthy self-confidence, inner feeling of security, sense of community and responsibility.

The character of a nation is shaped by reciprocation between biological and genetic properties and “everlasting character types”, viz. features that remain present disregarding the age and socially historical events.

The most significant features characteristic to Latvians are claimed to be: virtue in work, assiduousness, individualism, conservatism, wit, romanticism, pessimism.

Virtue in work and wisdom

One can surely discuss if virtue of work and assiduousness really are the most significant expressions of Latvian identity and are not only vague memories about

the times long gone; or if the presence or lack of these features is related to a specific environment and conditions and that perhaps a modern-day Latvian does not possess them at all. Outer conditions of people's lives, enslavement, inimical material conditions certainly make people want to rise and break away. However, this factor might not be the determinant one. People could still accept the situation, damn their fates, complain, look for detours and not try hard to change anything. Folklore of different people tells that fun, happiness and delight is related to relaxation, idleness and indolence. Even the Bible emphasizes the hardship of work – "By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat". Latvian folklore shows no such difficulties and roughness about work. The work is the world order for Latvians: "The one who works, lives", "Man is made for work". Folklore teaches how to overcome hardships and consoles that the burden of work is necessary and inevitable. "The one who wants eggs has to stand the hen cackle" – work is related to joy, happiness, virtue. People call a deed good if it is done thoroughly, neatly, with good intentions and clean conscience. The methodical principle of Latvian work philosophy is timeliness that prescribes every task to have its own time, as well as measures and natural restrictions. The best method of doing something is one task at a time. Folklore tells about different workers – impetuous, idle, quick-witted and lazy. People's wisdom says that laziness is a common feature. However, there is no ground to declare it to be the national vice of Latvian people. Laziness is a common human feature that roots in the human nature itself. Though Latvian folklore tells that laziness is against the laws of nature which prescribe that every living thing has to move and be busy. People judge laziness as a bad habit which hazards people both bodily and mentally – "The one, who serves to laziness, serves to devil".

The main elements of work for Latvians are practical thinking, interest and necessity. Working boosts thinking and the need makes thinking more intensive. People have always considered good workers also very smart.

If considering the relations between mind and emotions, Latvians have more often been characterized as affective, emotional, lyrical dreamers. Historically the world outlook of Latvians tends to reach harmony between oneself and the surroundings. Such vegetative harmony does not need any active mind involvement. Rationality as one of the most significant features of Western culture is still subordinate to emotionality in Latvian spiritual life. However, the analysis of folklore materials gives evidence that one of the main virtues is gathering, saving and increasing of knowledge. Wisdom was regarded to be the amount of gathered knowledge: "One is smart, but has no sense". It means that the understanding and ability to use knowledge was valued much higher. Wisdom (mind, sense) is the ability to handle the knowledge, to use it at the necessary moment and to gather more knowledge. Therefore mind and wisdom are to be understood as the ability to judge and reason. Wisdom is mainly related to work. One is wise and smart if he can see and find some work and be creative. Wisdom as a factor for work expresses: 1) as a good idea; 2) as planning of work beforehand; 3) as the reflection on work results; 4) as

reasonable management of tasks. In the Latvian world outlook one is wise if he always learns and develops his own skills, can comprehend both nature of himself and other people, knows many songs, and is tactful, serious and reticent. General opinion on fools is that a fool is a person who lacks elementary understanding and knowledge about behavioural norms and habits of the society.

Latvian assiduousness, dreams, ideals

Latvians have always had a disposition to ideals and dream buildings. It is being indicated both by folklore and popular literary heroes. When Dauka, a fictional character, is overcome by desire to see what is behind the horizon, he reaches the horizon and perishes. Also Atraitnes dēls (The Widow's Son), a character of the poet Vilis Plūdons, is not destined to come back home from the "Knowledge Palace" in Petersburg. Dauka, Widow's Son, the "Pearl Fisher" Ansis Vairogs by Jānis Poruks – all of them show the ineradicable desire of Latvians for ideals, spiritual assiduousness, but when coming into contact with the European environment, reality of life, these Latvian heroes are destined to perish. Such fanatics are both loved and despised, but people actually need them. Obviously not without a reason the traditional two sons in fairytales, though being good and wise, cannot really do anything. Miracles and big deeds are expected from the third son of the father, the simpleton Antiņš, who undoubtedly possesses good features as well – humility, non-resistance against evil, self-sacrifice, service for the "sleeping beauty". This national hero of Latvians is a person of ideas, self-sacrificing and believing in miracles. The belief is what brings him upwards the Glass Mountain. However, desire for miracles is a common human desire and it is possessed not only by Latvians. The difference could be found in the attitude – a miracle can be hoped for, it can be desired and dreamt of, but it can also be fought for, actively sought and strived to. Latvians put very much hope, even too much, on the appearance of Antiņš, awakening of the princess or coming of the Bear of Happiness. One question is still to discuss – why is the Glass Mountain so steep and slippery that the most wannabe climbers try just once, do not succeed and afterwards accept it and settle to live under the foot of the hill whilst praising, finding faults, and envying the current Antiņš.

Perhaps both support and condemnation comes from another long-lasting stereotype in Latvian environment – from the idea that poor Latvians are good, but the wealthy ones are bad. There is much emphasis on both the folklore and literary works showing Latvian disposition to altruism, self-denial, and humility. Even the God himself is frequently displayed as a poor man, but the devil – as a simpleton and loser. In folklore wealth is considered to be a factor of both happiness and misfortune. Nearly everyone strives to have if not a wealthy, than at least a well-off life. The problem lies in the fact that the human strive for wealth has no borders. Wealth is useful as an ideal, but if the satisfaction of needs exceed natural borders, instead of delight comes suffering. "The one who has no money should not think of love" or "Money can do much, love can do anything." Also Kristīne, a fictional

character by Rūdolfis Blaumanis, chooses the poor drunk, Bohemian Edgars over decent, wealthy Akmentiņš. Already Apsīšu Jēkabs in his work “Bagāti radi” (“Rich relatives”) shows that the cause of misfortunes of Andra father and Andra mother is the wealthy relatives, who are cold, merciless, and calculating people. Ansis, a character by Kārlis Skalbe, finds a magic coin and immediately transforms into a bad character.

Disposition, ideals, contradictoriness of Latvian character

In 1649 Paul Einhorn wrote: “A special feature of them is the evil that they use to set against each other people who used to hold together – they start slandering, swearing, offending each other’s honour, making a mountain out of a molehill, and thus disagreements, quarrels and hatred arise” (Šmits 1923, 120). Šmits, referring to the article “Life in a district in Kurzeme 90 years ago” („Kāda Kurzemes pagasta dzīve 90 gadu atpakaļ”) by Ernests Blese (published in *Dzimtenes vēstnesis*, 1912), notes that in court records there are rarely civil cases, viz. financial, debt and other similar cases to be seen. Most of the claims are related to defamation, cursing, gossiping, and other meanness. Unfortunately one has to admit that a statement by Jānis Lapiņš, made in 1914, is still current enough: “We are talented people but we always take a stubborn, cantankerous skunk with us who quarrels with the other deep inside of us. And if the quarrel was for an idea. In almost every society people are bickering because everybody wants to shine brighter in front...” (Lapiņš 1938, 62). It is easy to sow discord between Latvians, to make them turn against each other and slander. However, this factor has also another side – envy has often served as a motivator for development. As a result, Latvian envy together with the assiduousness becomes the reason for actions and activity. There are different points on this aspect in Latvian world outlook. There is an opinion that Latvians are moderate in their feelings and do not run to extremes. Their style is characterized by the dominance of light thoughts and conceptions over the dark ones. Though Latvians are considered to be practical, calculating people, they motivate their actions mainly with emotions and feelings. Jurevičs writes that the spiritual life of Latvians has originally been characterized by romanticism. However, the emotional disposition as well is considered by him to be a demand for clarity and logical thinking. Perhaps it is the expression of stability and harmony, claimed to be characteristic to Latvian culture as well and ensured by the balance between the good and bad, light and dark, mind and feelings. Recognition of opposites and non-categoricity allow the individuals to build their relationship with the world more creative and intimate. Writings of Poruks and Blaumanis and paintings of Janis Rozentāls express Latvian dreams of absolute purity and clarity but also concede the idea that every person can have his own truth and justice. “There is only one way leading to originality: being completely oneself, speaking and doing only things one is really thinking of” (Jurevičs 1936, 292). Undoubtedly every individual is a unique being but, when observing current events, one has

² Free translation by the author of the article.

to agree with the idea of Lapiņš expresses in the beginning of the 20th century and stating that Latvian character is contradictory and this can be seen in the tendency to extreme individualism and extreme democracy at the same time. In order to illustrate this issue, here is a longer excerpt from Lapiņš' work "Dreams and reality" (*Sapņi un īstenība* 1937). His statements sound very contemporary nowadays as well. "Social thinking of Latvians is based on a pattern – everyone has to be identical, what one does, is followed by all the others. There is a strong disposition to social mimicry in every society but in Latvian society it is so strong, as if a Latvian could only work as an apprentice if there is a master in front of him... When folksongs are being gathered, then there would be no more gatherers in the world as there are here, when people move to living in towns, then in droves, when agricultural technique is being bought, then the roads are full of their transporters, when societies are being established, it becomes a fever, when running away from Kurzeme, there is nobody left in the district anymore, when a revolution comes – the world admires Latvians as the first revolutionists, and when the land is being given, then everyone wants it, even those who have previously seen the countryside from the wagon window only" (L a p i ņ š 1937, 272). Disregarding the abovementioned, individualism and conservatism are exactly the features often used to characterize the world outlook of Latvians. The opinion prevails that because of the peculiar historical situation Latvians have lost nobility, spiritual aristocracy, independence of decision making, and faith in any secular power. The feeling of fatherland and native country in Latvians has always been stronger than the feeling of state belonging. A modern day Latvian also tends to claim his love for the land, but not for the state. "The body of the people is the state. It has to fulfil its bodily functions. At the moment the Latvian soul is unhappy in its body. If it can rise above the body, it is happy then" (Z ā l ī t e 2011, 32). The ethnos has been influenced by the deprivation of liberty and it has left such negative features as pretentiously cringing adaptation to circumstances, peculiar complaining, servant and orphan syndrome which roots in the assumption that it is not possible to expect deep cultural traditions and spiritual power from people who have been enslaved and influenced by other nations for seven or even eight hundred years. Social anthropologists admit that Latvians are "open-type" people who acquire new knowledge easily but in the meantime they are susceptible to foreign influence, inert, passive and patient. Dissatisfaction is often repressed; it is simmering deep inside and is usually expressed only orally– by peculiar, frustrated muttering. Latvians feel better when in the position of the critic, the oppositionist. There is also another, more uncommon opinion claiming that the revolutionarism together with an aggravated feeling of national justice has always been one of the strongest features of Latvian mentality, caused by the fact that suppression arouses spitefulness and desire to resist. It is more common to attribute Latvians to conservatism which, as a character trait, cannot be evaluated as purely positive or negative. It becomes apparent as a tendency to rely on oneself only and to maintain

³ Free translation by the author of the article.

one's opinion even if it is not valid and reasoned enough. Latvians take time to make decisions but, once decided, one maintains the persuasion and acts the way he considers correct. Perhaps is the conservatism a warranty of stability which is especially characteristic to Latvian peasants. "In the same way as the nature always achieves everything by following an unalterable conformity to natural rules, peasants tend not to alter their ways of life and work, tend to hold on to the same values regulated and shaped by nature and life with an instinct of a natural being. Peasants naturally do not like any changes" (Jurevičs 1936, 162). By P. Jurevičs, the town is a threatening and antagonistic power. He claims it destroys the natural rhythm of life and makes people dependent on artificial constructions.

Not infrequently individualism and conservatism express itself as reticence or even silence which is one of the features attributed to Latvians long ago and is approved of contemporary researchers as well (Mārtiņš Boiko). Nowadays such conclusions are being made with the help of comparisons of Latvians and other European nations. As cultures being less silent one often names Germans, Italians, Russians, Spaniards. More silent than Latvians are only Estonians. In his research about silence Boiko comes to a conclusion that nowadays the meaning of silence and its role in Latvian communicative culture are changing (Boiko 2004, 15). Traditionally keeping silent was considered positively and related to wisdom, harmony, balance; however, nowadays silence is being interpreted as an attribute of timidity, uncertainty, lack of opinion, non-communicativeness. If silence is considered as one the characteristic traits of Latvians, there is another contradiction, as Latvians are considered to be singing people. Song festivals, performances by folklore groups, singing gatherings – all of them are loud, massive expressions of joy and gladness. Ancient Latvians had many festivities (godī), beliefs, rituals and songs. Folklore indicates that Latvians knew well what, when and how has to be celebrated. Every festivity had its own rituals, songs, sequence of procedures that helped connecting to the good powers and gather positive energy. One has to take notice of the fact that the contemporary calendar contains relatively many days of mourning and commemoration. It is a widespread opinion that Latvian life nowadays is dominated by black colours, or in the best case – grey tones. Depressive films, depressive plays in theatre, sad songs, feeble jokes and an attempt to explain it away as a result of the specific history of Latvian people, servitude to strange people and cultures. Perhaps this is why Latvians tend to oppose against anything and anyone and live with a persuasion that he is an object of every persecution and offence. The "orphan syndrome" presses down and causes small-minded immersing into the prosaic sides of life, wailing about the hard life, injustice, offence... There is no trace of meekness, sung about in the folk songs, of tranquil mind and ability to preserve inner calmness in every situation of life, to look around from another perspective, to measure seven times and cut once, to remind oneself of the Latvian "mantra" more often – calm and slow, calm and slow, little by little.

Suniti Kumar Chatterji, a researcher whose research area was also the Baltic people, writes: "My impression on the Balts as an ancient branch of the Indo-

Europeans is following: they are a fine and a lovable and a most cultured and high-minded people, devoted to the ways of peace in living their simple agricultural life, fond of song and dance and music and flowers, and simple in mind and in religious faith. They loved in ancient times, and still love decoration through ornaments and jewellery and beautiful and colourful clothes, showing at the present day an uncommon good taste in their folk costume. They were not bellicose, and were not in the least inclined to harm others or to domineer over them. But they have been quite valiant and courageous in fighting for their freedom and their rights” (Chatterji 1990, 38).

Conclusions

Nowadays the globalization has made issues about the relationship between individual ethnical belonging and general human existence even more topical.

Latvian identity is characterized by individualism, self-determination, conservatism, disposition to harmony, emotionality, joy of work, and assiduousness. Latvians tend to feel more comfortable when in the position of the critic, the side of the opposition. For Latvians, negative character traits and feelings serve as motivators and urges more often than positive occurrences.

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Latvių tapatybė

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindinės sąvokos: *globalizacija, kultūra, etninė tapatybė, latvių tapatybė.*

Žmonėms kaip socialinėms būtybėms būdinga ne tik introspekcija ir savistaba. Jų pasaulėžiūra kuriama lyginant ir darant išvadas apie save, sau artimiausią grupę, tautą ir valstybę, todėl kultūrinės globalizacijos kontekste tikslinga kalbėti apie tautinę tapatybę, jos vystymąsi ir būdingus bruožus.

Šiame tyrime autorė analizuoja latvių pasaulėžiūrą ir tautinės tapatybės paiešką. Detaliau analizuojami etniniai ir epistemologiniai klausimai.

Tautinė tapatybė – tai žmogaus priklausymo tam tikram etnosui ir jo kultūrai jausmas. Tautinė tapatybė susijusi su priklausymu tam tikrai etninei grupei ar tautai, t. y. žmonių bendrijai, kuriai būdinga ta pati kilmė, istorinė atmintis, bendri kultūriniai elementai, tam tikra teritorija ir bendras pažinimas. Autorė detaliai tiria latvių tapatybę bei jos bruožus, apibendrina jos istoriją ir vystymąsi. Latviškai sielai būdingas individualumas, apsisprendimas, konservatyvumas, polinkis į harmoniją ir emocionalumą, darbo džiaugsmas, stropumas.

Ināra Leikuma

Latvian Identity

S u m m a r y

Keywords: *globalization, culture, ethnic identity, Latvian identity.*

Humans as social beings are not bound only to introspection and self-observation. Their world outlook is being created by comparing and coming to conclusions about oneself, one's nearest group, nation and state. Therefore in the context of cultural globalization it is purposeful to talk about national identity, its development, expressions and characteristics.

Within the framework of this research the author is analysing the Latvian world outlook and the search for national identity. Ethical and epistemological problems are analysed in a greater detail.

National identity is a human sense of belonging to a particular ethnos and its culture. Ethnic identity is related to belonging to a certain ethnic group or nationality which is a community of people sharing the same origins, historical memory, common cultural elements, attachment to a particular territory and common cognition. The author inspects the Latvian identity and its features and characteristics in a great detail and comes

to conclusions about its history and development. Latvian soul is characterized by individualism, self-determination, conservatism, disposition to harmony, emotionality, joy of work, assiduousness.

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